

USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77)

THE AVENGER

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October 2011



THIS MONTH:

The Frontmen rock the hangar bay | Soda can tabs | NFOs

table of
[CONTENTS]

Command corner	2
Best Calibration Lab in the Fleet	3
Hispanic heritage celebration	4
History of the U.S. Navy	5
Saving can tabs, helping others	7
Bringing back Barbara	9
5K Pride on Steel	13
The Frontmen arrive	15
NFOs: Second to none	19
Hangar deck directors	23
FFSC Calendar	27

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From the Commanding Officer



Greetings GHWB Families and Friends!

October is behind us and we're well into the homestretch of our first combat deployment. Your Sailors continue to answer the nation's call each and every day as they continue to support the air wing and Operation New Dawn. We've created some unforgettable memories over the last month and look forward to the final weeks leading up to our re-

turn to homeport.

This month we spent another fantastic week in Dubai, U.A.E. Your Sailors had an opportunity to relax, explore and enjoy the local culture in much cooler temperatures this time around.

One of the most memorable events of the deployment took place October 19th when we hosted three of country music's most distinct voices. Richie McDonald of Lonestar, Larry Stewart of Restless Heart, and Tim Rushlow of Little Texas sang several of their #1 hits and brought us all a little bit of home. The hangar bay concert was certainly a welcomed break. Sailors are still talking about how much fun they had.

We also had 25 folks complete the 36th Marine Corps Marathon right here on the ship. Runners trained for several months and kept the Fit Boss busy with treadmill maintenance. It isn't always easy to find the time to run but your Sailors stayed dedicated and were able to log in the required mileage every week. Our participants were featured at the Marine Corps Marathon Press Conference in Washington, D.C., and in

Running Times and Navy Times.

This month we also honored our Navy's 236th birthday. From our beginning in 1775 with just six frigates to our present-day highly diversified, modern Fleet with a total of 285 deployable ships and submarines, our Navy is the best it has ever been and the men and women of USS George H.W. Bush are leading the way. You have much to be proud of—our crew is ready to answer every call our nation makes. You are at the cornerstone of our readiness and your role is vitally important. For that I say Happy Birthday and Thank You!

Lastly, I feel the need to mention that the Green Bay Packers keep up my spirits with their 7-0 record. We have a bye this week but I'm already eyeing our Thanksgiving showdown with the Detroit Lions. The Detroit players better bring their A-game. That said I wish each of you joy, happiness, and health this Thanksgiving Day. Again, I express my deepest gratitude for your continued love and support of your Sailor and our Navy. We'll see you soon. Go Pack! ✚

Sincerely,

Capt. Brian "Lex" Luther
Commanding Officer

- ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM AUGUST:
- Successful completion of the 6th port visit of deployment
 - First concert at sea, featuring country music group, The Frontmen
 - 25 Sailors completed the Marine Corps Marathon aboard the ship using treadmills



On the cover:

A Sailor assigned to USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) captures video of country music supergroup, The Frontmen, during a concert in the ship's hangar bay. Photo by MC3(SW) Leonard Adams.

CALIBRATION LAB

Best in the Fleet

Story and layout by EM3 Jonhda Starling



Sailors assigned to the ship's Calibration Lab celebrate their recognition as the Fleet's best Calibration Lab. Photo by MCSN Kevin Steinberg.

Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic (COMNAVAIRLANT) recognized the USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department (AIMD) Calibration Lab for achieving a readiness score of 98.3 percent, surpassing the previous record of 97.9 percent.

Aviation Electronics Technician 1st Class (SW/AW) Bryan Deangelis, Calibration Lab's leading petty officer (LPO), made the announcement Sept. 9 to the 22 Sailors who helped set the record for not only the highest score in the U.S. 5th Fleet, but the entire U.S. Navy.

The score is calculated based on the number of test instruments calibrated on time and made ready-for-use. There are approximately 4,000 test instruments on board George H.W. Bush that require pe-

riodic calibration. Thanks to the hard work of the Calibration Lab, the ship now has 3,930 items calibrated and not overdue.

In order to calibrate a wide variety of tools, the Calibration Lab is manned with Sailors from a variety of ratings. Hull Technicians, Electrician's Mates, Aviation Boatswain's Mates (Fuel) and Machinist's Mates test physical and mechanical equipment like pressure gauges and temperature switches, while Aviation Electronics Technicians calibrate electronic equipment such as multimeters and aircraft support equipment.

According to Hull Technician 2nd Class Julio Zamarripa, the teamwork of the Sailors from different rates resulted in the Fleet's most outstanding performance.

"Everyone in Calibration Lab

gets along well," Zamarripa said. "Everyone wants to work."

The leadership team in the Calibration Lab builds a positive atmosphere that increases performance, said Deangelis. Sailors quiz one another and perform dramatizations of worst case scenarios, such as electrical shock incidents, in order to give training an energetic boost.

"We keep things exciting and different," said Machinist's Mate 2nd Class (SW) Aaron Gebhart.

Deangelis said the Calibration Lab's positive atmosphere and work ethic are the driving factors in the shop's success this deployment.

"Hard work, perseverance and dedication of the Calibration Lab are what make us the best in the Fleet," Deangelis said. "I am proud to be a part of this team."

HISPANIC HERITAGE

Story, photo and layout by MC3 Derrik Noack

More than 100 Sailors filled the foc'sle to take part in the Hispanic American Heritage month ceremony aboard USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) Oct. 7.

The crowd celebrated the month of remembrance which occurs each year from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15. President Ronald Reagan established the 30-day period as Hispanic Heritage month to recognize the histories, cultures and contributions of Hispanic Americans and their ancestors. This period includes the anniversary of independence for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico and Chile.

Sailors who attended the ceremony were able to celebrate Hispanic Heri-

tage month with different cultural presentations, dancing and traditional food.

"I didn't expect it to turn out so great," said Aviation Ordnanceman Airman (AW) Stephanie Matos, who took part in the ceremony. "It was exciting to see how packed the foc'sle was."

The event was hosted by the ship's American Diversity Heritage Organization Committee (ADHOC), which focuses on creating unity between the different cultures throughout the ship.

The ceremony kicked off with a well-received short film featuring Hispanic Sailors aboard the George H.W. Bush sharing stories of growing up in Hispanic households.

"Bravo Zulu to everyone involved with the video," said Logistics Specialist 3rd Class Dahomy Dockery. "They really did an outstanding job."

Following the film, attendees watched a PowerPoint presentation which displayed interesting facts on various countries such as Puerto Rico and Honduras.

"The PowerPoint was wonderful," said Ensign Tai Tuttle. "The whole set-up looked great, and I learned some fascinating information."

After Sailors performed traditional dances such as the salsa, guest speaker Lt. Cmdr. Victor Feal, a native of Puerto Rico, shared some encouraging words with the packed crowd.

"We should never lose sight of where we are and how we got there," said Feal. "To the 514 Hispanics we have on board, you all should be proud to know you have a past as well as a future."

Commanding Officer Capt. Brian E. Luther commended the Sailors who worked hard to make the ceremony a success.

"You all make me proud to be a United States Sailor," said Luther.

Once the ceremony concluded, the crowd enjoyed authentic Hispanic cuisine including arroz con pollo, a Spanish dish of browned chicken cooked with rice, and lomo saltado, a Peruvian dish of stir-fried beef cooked with peppers and onions.

"This food is absolutely delicious," said Damage Controlman Seaman Carlos Navedo. "It brings back memories of my mom's cooking."

Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class (AW) Jennifer Tavarez enjoyed all of the hard work and extra hours the ADHOC put into the ceremony.

"You can tell a lot of passion was put into this," said Tavarez. "There were many cultures represented, and now I'm kind of homesick." +



Sailors who participated in the Hispanic Heritage ceremony wore t-shirts celebrating different Hispanic countries.

THE 236-YEAR HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY



“A good Navy is not a provocation of war. It is the surest guarantee of peace.”
— President Theodore Roosevelt

Story and layout by MC3(SW/AW) Greg Wilhelmi

Many Sailors know that the purchase of two naval vessels on Oct. 13 1775, is considered the birth of the U.S. Navy, but the story behind that decision and the impact it had on a young nation is often overlooked.

In the early stages of the Revolutionary War, the creation of an official Navy was an issue of debate among members of the Continental Congress. Some argued that a Navy would protect shipping, defend the coast and make it easier to seek support from foreign countries. Others argued that it was foolish to create a Navy designed to challenge the British Royal Navy, the world's most dominant naval power at the time.

In the midst of the debate, George Washington commissioned seven ocean-going cruisers in order to intercept British supply ships, and to show Congress the capability of a small naval fleet. Washington felt that a Navy was crucial to the success of the country.

“Without a decisive naval force, we can do nothing definitive, and with it, everything honorable and glorious,” said Washington.

The original Continental Navy had mixed results. It succeeded in a number of engagements but lost 24 vessels. At one point, the newly-formed Navy was reduced to only two active ships. Following the war, Congress turned its attention to securing the western border of the United States, and the Navy was considered dispensable because of its high operating costs. In 1790, the U.S. Navy was disbanded.

The United States would be without a Navy for nearly a decade. However, when Barbary pirates terrorized the Mediterranean Sea and attacked U.S. merchant ships, the only

deterrence available was the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service (USRCS) – the predecessor of the U.S. Coast Guard.

In order to protect the country's growing economic interests around the world, then-President Thomas Jefferson supported the reinstatement of the Navy.

“We ought to begin a naval power if we mean to carry on our commerce,” said Jefferson.

Although the USRCS conducted operations against the pirates, they were not effective, and Congress ordered the construction and manning of six frigates on March 27, 1794. Three years later the first three frigates – USS United States, USS Constellation and USS Constitution – were commissioned into service.

Between 1794 and 1862, the U.S. Navy continued to grow and was very influential in securing a new western border to the United States, particularly in California during the Mexican-American War.

During the Civil War, the Union held a major advantage over the Confederacy on the seas – successfully blockading the South throughout the conflict. An incredible improvement to naval ships was made during the Civil War as ironclad warships were introduced into combat. The Battle of Hampton Roads in 1862 pitted two of the first ironclad ships, USS Monitor and CSS Virginia, against each other. However, after the war, the Navy would slip into disuse for nearly 40 years.

In 1907, most of the Navy's battleships, along with several support ships, were showcased in a 14-month circumnavigation of the world. Dubbed the Great White

Fleet, then-President Theodore Roosevelt ordered the mission to project the U.S. Navy's power around the world.

“[The Great White Fleet] was proof that the U.S. Navy had blue-water capability,” said former-President Woodrow Wilson, “The ships are [the country's] natural bulwarks.”

The Navy would continue to grow, but ultimately saw little action during World War I. However, by 1943, the number of U.S. Navy ships was greater than the combined fleets of all the other combatant nations in World War II. By the end of the war, the Navy added hundreds of new ships, including 18 aircraft carriers and eight battleships. The U.S. Navy comprised more than 70 percent of the world's total number of naval ships by the war's end.

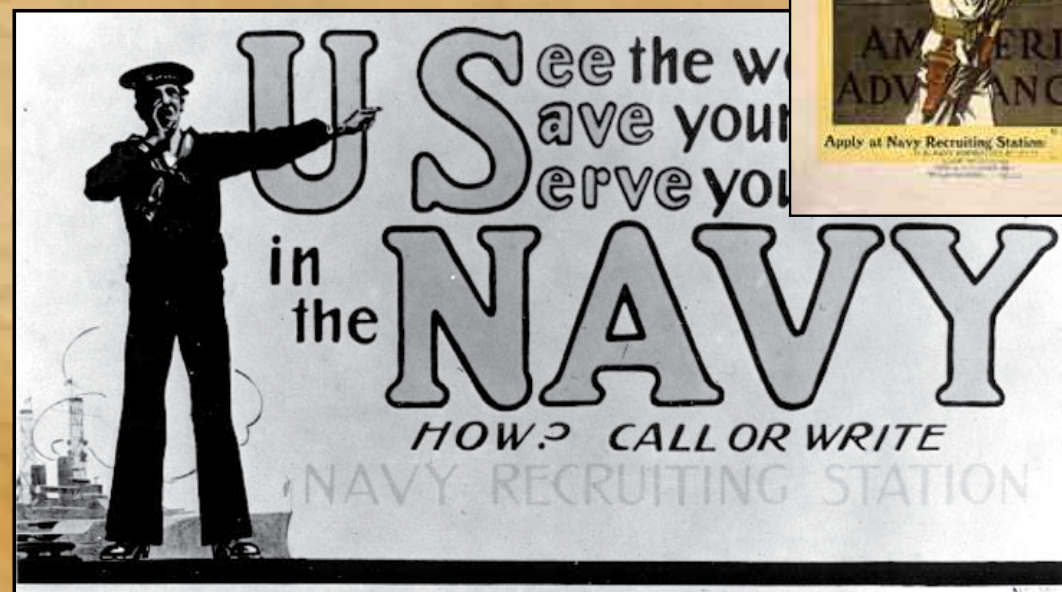
The Navy continues to provide protection and defense to U.S. interests in the 21st century. Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Ray Mabus said that although the times have changed, the purpose and goal of the U.S. Navy – defending liberty – remains the same.

“The Continental Navy and Continental Marines played crucial roles in winning our nation's freedom,” said Mabus in a letter to the Fleet. “Now, as then, you come from all walks of life to your calling on the front lines of freedom. You are taking the fight to the enemy, from Iraq to Afghanistan to the Horn of Africa and anywhere liberty is threatened.”

The Navy participated heavily in Operation Iraqi Freedom and continues to serve at the forefront of Operations Enduring Freedom and New Dawn.

Currently, the Navy has 391,000 Sailors on active duty and ready reserve, more than 3,700 aircraft, and approximately 284 ships. Today, the mission of the U.S. Navy is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas.

“Every Sailor has a responsibility to know and commit to our Navy's mission statement,” said Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Rick West. “It is why we exist, and how we make this world a better place. Winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas are why we are in this great Navy.”+



BATTLE OF MIDWAY



*Turning the Tide
in the Pacific!*



for
THE NAVY
PROMOTION FOR ANY ONE ENLISTING
APPLY ANY RECRUITING STATION
OR POSTMASTER

Stop, pop and drop it!

Story and layout by MCSN(SW) Michael Smevog
Photo by MC2(SW/AW) Timothy Walter

Sailors aboard USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) drink plenty of canned beverages. Between sodas and energy drinks, nearly 4,000 cans are emptied each day. For most, that means 4,000 pieces of trash. However, Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class (SW) Gibbi L. Johnson, assigned to George H.W. Bush Medical Department, who enjoys saving lives on and off duty, sees a hidden treasure.

In May, Johnson received approval to begin collecting can tabs around the ship to donate to the Ronald McDonald House program, which is part of Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC). After Commanding Officer Capt. Brian E. Luther made an announcement at the beginning of deployment that Sailors could collect tabs and donate them to charity, Johnson decided she should take the opportunity and accomplish something meaningful during the seven months.

"I feel like we have a great opportunity to make a difference in a child's life since we're out here and so many cans are being used anyway," Johnson said.

The Ronald McDonald House program provides a home-away-from-home for relatives to stay near hospitalized family members and has provided support to millions of people, including Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman (AW) Sarah M. Strong, assigned to George H.W. Bush Air Department.

When Strong was 4 years old, her family stayed in a Ronald McDonald House while her 12-year-old sister, Jessica, was sick in a neighboring hospital. After being poisoned by E. coli, Jessica was flown to Morgantown, W. Va., a considerable drive from the family's home in Elkins, W. Va. The family arrived at the hospital and slept on the waiting room floor. At that time, the family was living from paycheck to paycheck but the hospital staff told them they could stay at the Ronald McDonald House. For a small donation

to the foundation, the Strong's were able to stay close to the hospital and be near their daughter. Unfortunately, the last night they were at the hospital, Jessica passed away.

Despite their sadness, the family was thankful for the opportunity provided by RMHC. The Strong family had been able to spend Jessica's last few days with her. RMHC has helped provide millions of families with places to stay while their children are in hospitals, and continues to make a positive difference with the donations it receives.

After her sister passed, Strong and her then-8-year-old sister, Allison, collected can tops in their elementary school in support of the foundation that helped her family. More than 10 years later, when Strong received an e-mail from Johnson about collecting can tops on the ship, Strong decided she should help ensure as many were collected as possible.

"I feel like I should give back and help a family like we were helped," said Strong.

Strong went around the ship to pass out bags for divisions who weren't already saving tabs so that they could begin saving. Strong and Johnson regularly collect the tabs around the ship and add them to the barrel so they can be cashed-in at a recycling facility to provide a donation to the Ronald McDonald Foundation in Hampton Roads, Va., when the ship returns.

Johnson and Strong feel so strongly about the project that they do not hesitate to remove the tabs from cans they find in divisional metal bags, or in the large tri-walls that were on the flight deck during the steel beach picnic.

"I feel like if everybody else sees me doing it, then they'll start saving them too," Strong said.

Strong hopes that Sailors support the positive cause so that more families can receive help in difficult times.

"I got really excited when I saw them being collected [in the Oasis] in Dubai," she said.

There are currently 305 Ronald McDonald Houses in 52 countries and regions around the world. Ronald McDonald Houses provide more than 7,000 bedrooms to families around the world each night, saving them over \$250 million in hotel costs. RMHC's programs include Ronald McDonald Family Rooms, which are places to rest and regroup at the hospital where a sick child is staying, and Ronald McDonald Care Mobiles, which are clinics on wheels that offer affordable health care for children in their neighborhoods.

According to Johnson, about 35 pounds have been collected so far. Johnson and Strong agreed that if everyone starts contributing, the amount should increase dramatically. To have can tabs collected, contact Johnson or Strong through e-mail, or drop the tabs off in the blue barrel located on Supply Department's S-8 Division Shipping and Receiving mezzanine. †



Aviation Boatswain's Mate
(Handling) Airman (AW)
Sarah M. Strong



Bringing Back Barbara

Story and photos by MCSA(SW/AW) Brian Read Castillo

Layout by MC2(SW/AW) Joshua Horton and MCSA(SW/AW) Brian Read Castillo

RESTORATION

300 man hours, 2 friends, 1 tractor...



Worn down and faded blue, the tractor sat chained to the deck of the hangar bay. Slowly bleeding oil from beneath its frame, the machine, once chosen for homage, appeared left for dead. It would not stay so for long.

Aviation Support Equipment Technician 2nd Class (AW) Vincente Castillo and Aviation Support Equipment Technician 2nd Class Michael Giunta decided to transform the battered workhorse into a tractor worthy of its namesake. Starting June 14, they began their month-long restoration of the USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) show tractor, Barbara, named after the wife of George H.W. Bush.

At the time of the ship's commissioning, civilian contractors were tasked with designing a tractor that would epitomize the ship's namesake and crew. Their goal was to design and paint a tractor that would resemble the light aircraft carrier USS San Jacinto (CVL 30).

Over time the wears and tears of her daily runs on the

flight deck took their toll. Routine break downs, frequent oil leaks and her dull appearance drove Castillo and Giunta to formulate a plan.

"She was picked to honor George H.W. Bush," said Castillo. "We couldn't have her looking the way she did."

Giunta shared Castillo's passion and set about to help him restore it.

"The civilians did an OK job, but we felt she needed a face lift," said Giunta.

So they began designing a paint-scheme that would display George H.W. Bush's history. Both wanted to show the history of the man and the future of the aircraft carrier that bears his name.

They dedicated nearly 300 man-hours of overtime on the tractor while still accomplishing routine maintenances on nine other tractors on the flight deck and hangar bay, said Castillo.

They chose each graphic for a distinct reason, so that each portion of the tractor would have meaning and relevance. Giunta began by laying

out and printing different designs. Castillo followed by laying them down and tracing over them with paint.

The most noticeable graphic is the ship's seal, which covers the hood. President Bush's squadron logo is painted on the right side of the tractor, resembling one that might have been found on one of his original planes.

"We wanted the tractor to resemble a World War II plane," said Giunta.

Bush's signature can also be found in the driver's seat of the tractor along with the name Barbara in cursive.

"I think everyone is going to take a little more pride in that particular tractor because of what it represents, the way it looks, and the amount of time and work we put into it," said Castillo.

For Castillo, this project came to represent more than he imagined.

After starting the project, Castillo had his Perform-to-Serve package denied. However, he continued the restoration project, calling it one of

the most rewarding experiences of his naval career.

After completing it, Castillo hoped the Bush family would see the tractor before he left.

Not long before his final flight from the ship, Barbara Bush, wife of former President and the ship's namesake George H.W. Bush, requested a photo from the ship. She

did not ask for an aerial view of the flight deck or Sailors in front of the ship's seal. Instead, she asked for a photo of the tractor that Castillo and Giunta rebuilt.

Castillo called the project his final contribution to his command, department and fellow shipmates.

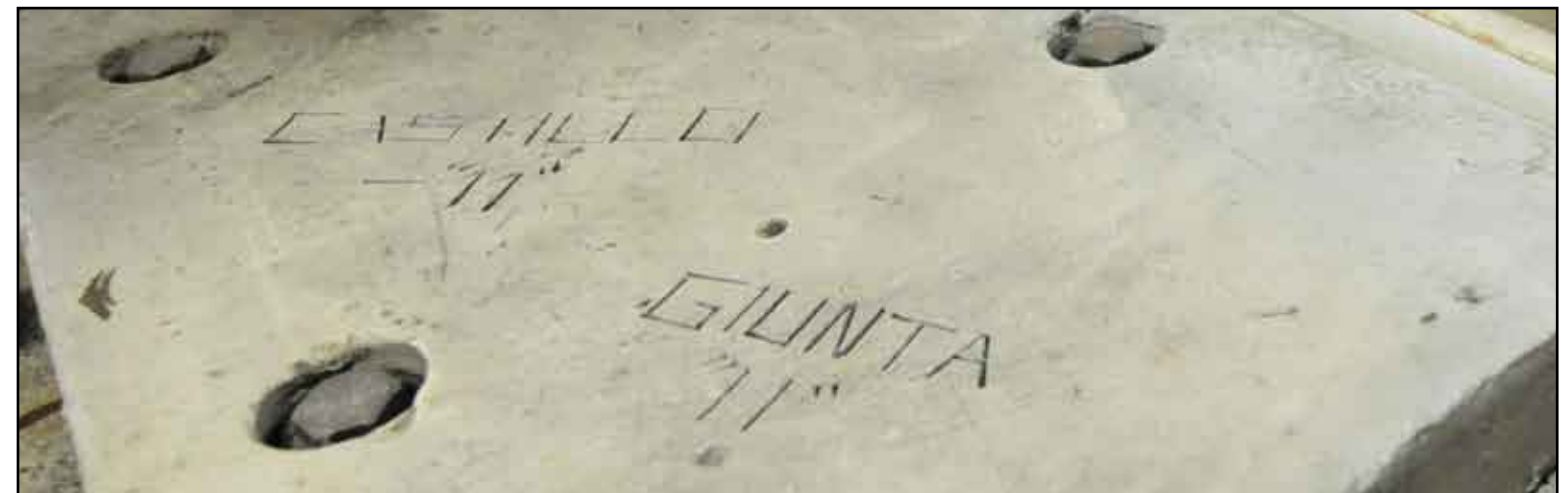
"This is my last cruise, my last time, but I left my mark." +

1. AS2(AW) Vincente Castillo spray-paints the tractor in the AIMD shop.

2. Castillo looks over sketches during the first stages of restoration.

3. AS2 Michael Giunta tapes a graphic to the side of the tractor.

4. Giunta paints the hood of the tractor.



"This is my last cruise, my last time, but I left my mark."

-Aviation Support Equipment Technician 2nd Class (AW) Vincente Castillo

Pride On Steel

Story and layout by MCSN(SW) Michael Smevog Background photo by MC3(SW) Billy Ho

More than 400 Sailors aboard USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) participated in the Pride On Steel 5K Run on the ship's flight deck Oct. 7.

The First Class Petty Officers' Association (FCPOA) hosted the event to raise money for the command's annual Family Readiness Group (FRG) sponsored Children's Holiday Party, scheduled for Dec. 4.

Ship's Serviceman 1st Class (SW/AW) Laura A. Clarke, chairman of the FCPOA Fundraising Committee, explained that while the event will help support the holiday party for crewmembers' children, it also gave Sailors a chance to participate in physical activity in support of a good cause.

"Everyone was able to come together as an association and enjoy themselves, and raise funds for the FRG at the same time," said Clarke.

The first three male and female participants who finished the 10 laps around the flight deck earned prizes. Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 3rd Class (AW) Robert M. Jonesbest received a sports watch for completing the race in the fastest time.

"It felt great when I found out that I won," Jonesbest said. "I knew it would be difficult

with so many other great athletic individuals running along with me, so winning was a very humbling and rewarding experience."

Aviation Support Equipment Technician 2nd Class (AW/SW) Teresa I. Pogorelec finished as the first place female, winning a pair of designer sunglasses.

"I just run for fun, but of course winning was a great surprise," said Pogorelec. "I love to run and participate in races, especially when they are for a good cause such as the children's Christmas party."

Originally the ship's FCPOA planned to make 100 t-shirts for participants in the event, but due to the high demand they had to quickly make several hundred more.

"We're honored to have everyone's support and very pleased to have a bigger turnout than we expected," said Clarke.

According to Aviation Electronics Technician 1st Class (AW) Cedric J. Marrioneaux, a member of the FCPOA Fundraising Committee, FCPOA raised \$1,500 and plans on doing many more to promote morale throughout the ship and continue to raise funds for Sailors and their families.



Clockwise from top left: Sailors begin the 5K run on the flight deck Oct. 7. Logistics Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Desiree A. Garner gives a time check to Sailors. Sailors join in a prayer before the run. Photos by MC2(SW/AW) Jennifer L. Jaqua.

Kickin' It Country

Country music supergroup, The Frontmen, performed for Sailors aboard USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) Oct. 19 in the ship's hangar bay.

The Frontmen include Richie McDonald, former lead singer of the country band Lonestar; Tim Rushlow, formerly of the band Little Texas; and Larry Stewart of the band Restless Heart. The trio is touring the United States for the first time as a group and decided to stop and play a show for Sailors.

"We're here to lift spirits," said Richie McDonald. "Our job is to come out, let everybody here have a good time and hopefully put a smile on [the Sailors'] faces."

Rushlow agreed: "I've seen the faces of service members light up when I play them a song. I love to bring service members a slice of home."

Before hitting the stage, the country group toured the ship and ate lunch with members of the crew. They visited the flight deck to watch a barricade drill and stopped by the ship's radio studio. During a visit to the pilot house, the

singers addressed the crew on the ship's 1MC announcing system. They also toured the ship's Combat Direction Center and Carrier Air Traffic Control Center.

All three members of The Frontmen have performed for military members around the globe, including other aircraft carriers. For McDonald, this marked his second visit to the Navy's newest aircraft carrier.

"It's astonishing," said McDonald, who embarked during the ship's Friends and Family Day Cruise in May 2010. "I just can't believe that something this large, with all this equipment, can actually float. It's like a city in the sea."

After the sound was checked and the lights were cued, Sailors gathered in the hangar bay to witness the first live musical performance of the deployment.

"I can't think of a cooler place to have a concert than on an aircraft carrier in the middle of the ocean," said Aviation Structural Mechanic Airman Chelsea R. Taufaasau.

Sailors sang along to some of their favorite songs, including "Amazed," "The Bluest Eyes in Texas," and "God

(Continued on next page)

Larry Stewart, lead singer of the country band Restless Heart, performs as a member of the country supergroup, The Frontmen, in the ship's hangar bay. Photo by MCSA(SW/AW) Brian Read Castillo.

Story by MC3(SW/AW) Greg Wilhelmi
Layout by MC3(SW/AW) Greg Wilhelmi and MCSN Kevin Steinberg



The Frontmen of Country



Blessed Texas,” and enjoyed the break from the daily routine of ship life.

“It’s great that they came out here for us,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 3rd Class Katie L. Heilmann. “It’s a great morale booster that will keep the ship going through the rest of this deployment.”

Throughout the day, The Frontmen took advantage of several opportunities to pose for photos, sign autographs, and visit with Sailors.

“I’m from a town where the biggest attraction is a Wal-Mart. This kind of thing doesn’t happen where I come from,” said Aviation Ordnanceman Airman Justin R. Cagle. “I had my first guitar signed by some of the most popular country singers ever. I’m beyond excited right now.”

The group tries to do shows every year for service members.

“I’ve got Country Music Awards, Grammy nominations and platinum records hanging on the wall. I’m proud of those things, but they just collect dust,” said Rushlow. “This kind of stuff doesn’t collect dust. These are memories that last a lifetime.” +



1-3. Larry Stewart, Richie McDonald and Tim Rushlow, respectively, rehearse before the concert. Photos by MC3(SW) Joshua Sheppard.

4. Tim Rushlow signs a guitar for Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) Airman Mario Molnar. Photo by MC3(SW) Kasey Krall.

5. Members of The Frontmen pose for a picture with Quartermaster 3rd Class (SW) Tracy L. Sorgenfrie. Photo by MC3(SW) Billy Ho.

6. The Frontmen perform for Sailors in the hangar bay. Photo by MC2(SW/AW) Jennifer Jaqua.

2ND TO NONE

STORY AND LAYOUT BY MCSN KEVIN J. STEINBERG



Lt. j.g. Richard R. Delk has been up since 4:30 a.m. preparing for an 8 a.m. launch. He climbs into the back seat of an EA-18G Growler, checks his equipment, and signals to the Sailors on the flight deck. He braces himself for the take-off blast and the responsibility of the next five hours. During the flight, the pilot needs to concentrate on flying, and Delk, a Naval Flight Officer (NFO) with Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 141, makes that possible.



Aviation Structural Mechanic Airman Recruit Beverly Luke, from Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 141, signals to a pilot and NFO before a flight. Photo by MCSN Kevin J. Steinberg.

For most people who do not work on the flight deck, their concept of an NFO may start with movie characters like Goose in “Top Gun” and Chris Burnett in “Behind Enemy Lines.” NFOs specialize in airborne weapons and sensor systems. They are the men and women who operate advanced systems on board most multi-crew naval aircraft. They can also serve as the overall tactical mission commanders of single or multiple aircraft assets during a given mission.

The NFOs responsibility depends on which aircraft he or she is in. On the Growler, Delk is responsible for jamming enemy radars and radios, communications, air-to-ground radar, and setting up the high-speed an-

ti-radiation (HARM) air-to-ground missile. On other platforms, like the E-2C Hawkeye, the NFOs on board monitor and locate air and surface contacts.

“NFOs are an integral part of the E2-C Hawkeye’s mission,” said Lt. Joel D. Strong, a pilot with Carrier

“It’s two brains working together to solve the same problem.”

— Lt. j.g. Andrew J. Hoffman

Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 124. “They run the weapons system in the combat information center to command and control air wing assets, and



An EA-18G Growler, from Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 141, flies over the carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77). U.S. Navy photo.



Lt. j.g. Jeremy N. Armstrong, an NFO with Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 124, dons his flight suit. Photo by MCSN Kevin J. Steinberg.

provide a surface and air defense picture for the strike group.”

While NFOs do not fly the aircraft, they do receive the same initial training as pilots in Pensacola, Fla., during Aviation Preflight Indoctrination (API). NFOs then move on to primary flight training where they learn the basics of flight operations prior to being assigned to a specific aircraft platform.

“What that aircraft ends up being depends on flight school performance, your desires and, of course, the needs of the Navy,” says Delk.

Delk said the platform they are assigned to determines what path and how long they spend in flight school, which can take anywhere from one to two years. Carrier aviation students spend an additional 14 weeks in their primary training squadron.

“It’s stressful because they give you a lot of information very quickly,” said Lt. j.g. Andrew J. Hoffman,



Lt. j.g. Richard R. Delk, from Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 141, does a pre-flight inspection before flying. Photo by MCSN Kevin J. Steinberg.

from Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 213. “Everything you do is graded.”

However, once schooling is complete, NFOs begin what they say is the best part of their job – flying every day.

“My best experience was flying through the Cascade Mountains near Whidbey Island, Wash., at 500 feet and 400 knots,” said Delk.

However, Hoffman added that they can never forget the reason they are in the aircraft.

“It’s two brains working together to solve the same problem,” said Hoffman. “You gotta back the pilot up.”

Though NFOs have a job that can be stressful at times, Hoffman said he would not trade the experience for anything.

“I have no complaints. I get to fly in a high performance aircraft on a daily basis,” said Hoffman. “I love it.” +



A GAME OF INCHES

STORY AND LAYOUT BY MCSN KEVIN J. STEINBERG

ABH3(AW) Ryan T. Sparks directs an aircraft move in Hangar Bay Two. Photo by MCSN Kevin J. Steinberg.



ABH3(AW) Jeremy Perish, left, directs ABHAN William Boggs in the movement of a F/A-18E Super Hornet in the hangar bay. Photo by MC2(SW) Jeffrey Richardson.

Few people can claim responsibility for aircraft worth more than \$5 million. Fewer still are responsible for moving it in a confined space that is alive, constantly moving and full of obstacles.

Welcome to the world of hangar deck directors. From moving aircraft to setting up for ceremonies and replenishments-at-sea to fire fighting teams, they take the lead each day.

“It’s our job, and we take pride in what we do,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 3rd Class (AW) Kevin A. Powell, a hangar deck director with Air Department’s V-3 division.

Moving an aircraft isn’t easy, especially in the hangar bay where there are approximately five helicopters and 26 aircraft that shift and move on an average day.

“We don’t have the space privileges like they do on the flight deck. The flight deck is a lot more open,” said Powell. “Moving aircraft in the hangar bay becomes a game of inches.”

Every aircraft move has to be carefully planned to accommodate other aircraft, forklifts, supplies, and any of the other constantly shifting obstacles in the hangar bay. If the plane hits anything, it is called a “crunch,” something every hangar deck director fears, because the resulting damage to the aircraft can cost tens of thousands of dollars. To avoid this and ensure the safety of the crew, directors receive a great deal of hands-on training prior to donning the yellow shirt that signifies their position as leaders.

Every yellow shirt director first starts as a blue shirt, learning how to work the elevators,

take directions, secure an aircraft, and operate the various equipment they use, like the spotting dolly. It can take a blue shirt anywhere from three to six months to earn all the necessary qualifications.

“If you don’t know how to drive a spotting dolly then you won’t know how it moves, and you’re going to have a tough time telling it where to go,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 2nd Class (AW) Robert A. McCoy. “You have to know what that dolly is capable of.”

Once blue shirts earn the prerequisite qualifications, they can put on a yellow shirt and go under instruction to receive training in directing and moving the aircraft. The training can take anywhere from two to six months, after which the Sailors take an oral board from senior yellow shirts. Once they pass, they don their traditional whistle and get to work.

It takes a total of seven people to move an aircraft. The hangar deck director leads the spotting dolly driver, two chock carriers, two tail safety observers, and a plane captain who controls the brakes.

Moving an aircraft can become a race against the clock, particularly when it involves a call from the Aircraft Handling Officer, known as the Handler. He informs the directors where an aircraft needs to go and gives them a deadline – maybe two hours, maybe five minutes. Whatever it is, the hangar deck directors and their crew have to be ready. The final destination of the aircraft might be topside, to launch in support of ground operations, or it might be literally within inches of something else in the hangar bay. It is up to the directors to reconfigure the planes and gear in the hangar bay in order to get it out.



ABH3(AW) Kevin A. Powell, right, trains ABHAN(AW) Antonisha S. Jones on the spotting dolly. Photo by MCSN Kevin J. Steinberg.

“We have to get it done, and we make it happen,” Powell said.

When the elevators lower to the hangar bay, the directors have a limited amount of time. They have to quickly move the aircraft onto the elevator before it is time for it to go back up.

“Sometimes you can’t take your time,” said Powell. “It has to get there safely, but it has to be in a rush.”

Safety is always on the director’s mind, particularly when one of their blue shirts is nearing the deck edge.

“When I push an aircraft onto the elevator and I’m getting close to the edge, I might feel a little tingle in my stomach, because I know one of my blue shirts is very close to the edge,” said Powell. That tingle keeps him alert and focused on the blue shirts who work under his direction.

The aircraft are inherently dangerous, and present unique hazards.

“Every aircraft is filled with fuel, oils, hydraulic fluids and sometimes ordnance,” Powell said. “We have to be prepared at all times to know how to fight fires.”

Because of this level of responsibility, the ship’s 35 hangar deck directors are especially proud of earning their jerseys.

“A yellow shirt is something that we consider a privilege because it promotes you to a leader,” said Powell. “It says that your chain of command trusts you to take the next step, to take multi-million dollar aircraft into your hands and know what to do with it at all times.”

Powell added that the nature of the job prevents him and his blue shirts from having a normal schedule.

“We don’t have the luxury of saying we’re going to the

gym every day at this time or going to eat chow every day at this time,” Powell said. “At any time the Handler can call and say he needs an aircraft.”

Despite the unpredictability, McCoy said he loves his job.

“It’s a rush,” said McCoy. “It’s 90,000 things going through your head at once and then you realize you just moved a multi-million dollar aircraft. Who else gets to do that?”



From left: ABH3(AW) Kevin A. Powell, ABHAN(AW) Alfredo M. Sosa and ABH2(AW) Robert A. McCoy enjoy a free moment in Hangar Bay Three. Photo by MCSN Kevin J. Steinberg.

November 2011 Fleet and Family Support Center Calendar

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

	1 Couples Workshop Oceana 2-4:30p.m. Federal Employment System Norfolk 1-4p.m.	Job Search Strategies Northwest 9a.m.-noon	2 Money Management Yorktown 8a.m.-4p.m. Surviving the Holidays Norfolk 10-11:30a.m.	Job Search Strategies Norfolk 1-4p.m.	3 Changes Norfolk 1:30-3:30p.m.	4 Savings and Investments Newport News 8-9:30a.m. TSP Newport News 9:30-11a.m.
7 Car Buying Strategies Oceana 2:30-4p.m. Credit Management Oceana 1-2:30p.m.	Couples Workshop Little Creek 4:30-7p.m. Career Planning Oceana 9a.m.-noon	8 Financial Services Norfolk 8:30-10a.m. Couples Workshop Oceana 2-4:30p.m.	Resume Writing Oceana 9a.m.-noon Norfolk 1-4p.m.	9 Retirement Planning Norfolk 1-2:30p.m. Finances for Newlyweds Yorktown 9-10:30a.m.	10 Changes Norfolk 1:30-3:30p.m. Couples Workshop Norfolk 4-6:30p.m.	11
14 Money Management Norfolk 4:30-8p.m.	15 Money Management Norfolk 4:30-8p.m. Couples Workshop Yorktown 4-6:30p.m.	Federal Employment System Oceana 9a.m.-noon	16 Car Buying Strategies Norfolk 10-11:30a.m. Credit Management Norfolk 8:30-10a.m.	Job Search Strategies Newport News 8:30-11:30a.m.	17 Changes Norfolk 1:30-3:30p.m. Couples Workshop Norfolk 4-6:30p.m.	18 Interview Techniques Newport News 8:30-11:30a.m.
21 Money Management Norfolk 8a.m.-4p.m. Resume Writing Oceana 9a.m.-noon	22 Money Management Oceana 8a.m.-4p.m. Surviving the Holidays Newport News 8-9:30a.m.	Couples Workshop Yorktown 4-6:30p.m. Resume Writing Norfolk 8:30-11:30a.m.	23 Surviving the Holidays Newport News 8-9:30a.m.		24	25
28 Retirement Planning Oceana 8:30-10a.m. TSP Oceana 10-11:30a.m.	Resume Writing Oceana 1-4p.m.	29 Home Ownership Little Creek 8:30a.m.-2:30p.m.	30			

To Register, contact: FFSC Oceana: 443-2923, FFSC Norfolk: 444-2102,
FFSC Yorktown: 887-4606, FFSC Northwest: 421-8770, FFSC Little Creek: 462-7563